

2021 Division II State Playoffs.

GIANTS ADVANCE WITH 27-17 VICTORY

by Bill Bray | Oct 30, 2021 | Football



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FREMONT- For the second straight season, Chad Long's Fremont Ross Little Giants have advanced to the second round of the OHSAA playoffs in Division II Region 6 with a 27-17 victory over the North Royalton Bears.

After two straight losses to end the season, the Little Giants had hopes of turning things around as they were given a reawakening by making the playoff rounds. Ross started the contest by answering critics of their offensive performances the last two weeks with a Kaden Holmes touchdown run on the third play from scrimmage, covering 54 yards just two minutes into the contest. Holmes, Fremont Ross' Mr. Everything, found a gap and sprinted down the western sideline to pay dirt for the Giants.

North Royalton answered back with a pair of touchdowns, one at the 10:33 mark of the second quarter and the other with just six ticks left on the clock. The Giants found themselves down 14-7 at the break.

The team was challenged at halftime. "We are guaranteed one more half together," coach Chad Long told his forces. "I, and I hope you don't want it to end tonight."

For several weeks now, Long has talked about his team just not being able to finish a game. Well, it appears it has come at just the right time as the Giants (8-3) win their second playoff game in two seasons to advance to a second-round

match against Avon High School, who sits at 9-2 after beating Toledo St. Francis 63-28.

The second half was really a combination of Holmes' passing and a staunch defense that gave up only three second-half points. Interceptions by Kalijah Alejandro and Anthony Vann highlighted Ross's defensive performance, along with the frontline play of London Johnson, Ethan Green, and company.

Holmes scored the tying touchdown with 10:39 left in the second half as the Giants, as they did in the first half, scored on their very first possession.

North Royalton came back, and with 42 left in the third period, Nick Colabianchi nailed a 34-yard field goal to give the Bears their second lead at 17-14.

Enter Elijah Simms, the standout sophomore for Ross, who has had some spectacular games as of late, caught a 23-yard strike from Holmes with 10:07 remaining in the game to put Ross back on top 21-17.

Enter Anthony Vann. The swift junior, not playing his best ball the last few weeks, hauled in an interception on defense, then, with 7:55 left in the game, put the icing on the Little Giants' cake with a 12-yard Holmes pass reception. Making the final score, Fremont Ross 27, North Royalton 17. "This was Anthony's explosion game," Long said. "We know it is there; he just has to have faith and believe. So, I am proud of him." Long added, "I just really believe in our kids, and I think we can make an excellent run." Long, of course, had to mention his "Mr. Everything". "It all starts with Kaden Holmes," Long said. "There is so much pressure put on that kid, and he's only a junior. He accepts it and lives by it, and we are fortunate enough to have a Kaden Holmes."

"We've got to see our offense back," Long said, referring to the last two dismal offensive display weeks. But as mentioned, it was the defense's performance in the second half that was the difference-maker for the Little Giants. "North Royalton is a pretty dangerous team; they have some hard running backs as well as their quarterback. But our guys won the line of scrimmage a lot tonight," Long continued. "Ray Long, our defensive coordinator, made some adjustments at halftime. From what we could see, they were doing differently in the first half. They are not a passing team. They are a run team first, and we wanted them to be in passing scenarios, and that is exactly what happened." When Long was asked what the biggest surprise during the game was, he said, "Nothing." "I believe in our kids; I believe in our coaches, and I believe in our team."

Statistically, North Royalton possessed the ball nearly 30 of the 48 minutes and ran 73 plays as compared to Fremont's 47. Kaden Holmes once again threw for over 200 yards, hitting on 14 of 21 passes for 225 yards with two touchdowns. Holmes added 118 yards on just 11 rushes and scored twice with his feet as well. Sophomore Elijah Simms stole the show in receiving as he caught four passes for 101 yards and a score. Vann added 68 yards on four catches with a touchdown. Simms was the defensive standout, to be sure, as he had seven tackles, four solo tackles, six assists, 0.5 sacks, and one tackle for a loss.



Ross sophomore Elijah Simms closes in on the North Royalton quarterback.



Anthony Vann snags one of his second half receptions for a first down.



Ross quarterback, Kaden Holmes, breaks free for a 54-yard touchdown run during early action Friday night in a Division II, Region 6 playoff game.

LITTLE GIANTS FINISH SEASON 8-4

by Bill Bray | Nov 6, 2021 | Football



By Bill Bray

AVON – Avon came calling and brought home a 52-26 victory on their home turf against Fremont Ross in a Division II Region 6 quarterfinal.

The Eagles took flight early and often in the first quarter. They scored two quick touchdowns to jump out to a 14-0 lead. The first was on an Ethan Holbrook punt return that covered 80 yards, and the second was on Avon's first offensive play of the game to give Avon 14 rapid points.

The Little Giants came back to cut the lead to 14-6 after Fremont converted a fourth down and ended the drive as Kaden Holmes found his favorite target, Bryson Hammer, for a five-yard touchdown to put Ross on the broken board. Broken board, because the first half was plagued by a stadium clock that malfunctioned. The fractured clock was a problem for much of the second quarter.

Ross was not able to put any more points up until after Avon took a 24-6 lead. Fremont's second score again consisted of Holmes and Hammer taking the Little Giants down the field. The drive ended with an eight-yard Hammer catch to temporarily put Ross back in the game, down 24-12 at the break.

Avon again threw an upper cut to the Giant's defense as quarterback Sam DeTillio found Holbrook with a 55-yard bomb to make it 31-12 as the third quarter began. "The defensive secondary play was sloppy in the second half," Ross coach Chad Long said. Long used no excuses and rightfully so. It was just the fact that the #2 seed Eagles' offense was too much for the 7th seed Little Giants' defense. Holbrook caught another 48-yard bomb from DeTillio later in the third quarter, putting the game way out of reach at 45-18.

Avon's JC Caffey and Gavin Ehrhardt ran hard and scored often against the Little Giants' defense. Avon's big, young offensive line had its way most of the game. On a positive note, Holmes was his old self as he threw four touchdown passes for the Little Giants, who certainly look forward to having the multi-talented quarterback back next season. He finished the season with 34 touchdown passes, a school record for Ross. Avon's head coach, Mike Elder, spoke very highly of the Ross junior signal caller. "Their quarterbacks are as advertised. He's a special player, and they can score points in buckets with him at the helm." No statistics were available for the game.



Ross co-captain, Bowen Schoch, fights through a block to tackle the Avon running back.



Ross junior signal caller, Kaden Holmes will return in 2022 as an All-Ohio candidate.



Junior receiver Anthony Vann fights for yardage after a reception.



Senior Ethan Green makes a tackle during Friday night action at Avon.